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COUNTRY	Czechoslovakia	REPORT	
TOPIC	Division Maneuvers at the Libava Troop Training Grounds in 1953		
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REMARKS			
This is UNEVALUATED			

- Between 20 and 25 May 1953, a large field exercise was held by two divisions from Moravia in the area of the Libava (P 50/O 07) troop training grounds. One of the divisions came from Olomouc (P 50/N 85). In the summer of 1953, the maneuver was to be repeated on a larger scale with leading Czechoslovakian politicians attending. According to the commander of the Lipnik infantry school, the main purpose of the field exercise was to reveal the efficiency of unit commanders.
- The troops were divided into a "red" attacking and a "blue" defending force. The division which belonged to the red group was organized into three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, a reconnaissance company, an engineer company, a chemical warfare company, and a supply battalion. Other units belonging to the red group included a reinforced infantry regiment, and a tank battalion with T-34 tanks made in Czechoslovakia. The blue group consisted of two infantry regiments, undetermined artillery units, and other supporting weapons. The reconnaissance company of the red group was equipped with nine German armored personnel carriers, and several sidecar motorcycles which had heavy machine guns mounted on them. The soldiers were armed with model 48 A submachine guns and light machine guns. The engineer company had entrenching tools and mine-laying and detecting devices, but no bridge construction material was observed. Portable spray tanks for Yperite, equipment for gas detection and decontamination, such as rubber suits and calcium chloride, and other gas-defense devices were observed with the chemical warfare company. A platoon of the latter was equipped with nine portable Czechoslovakian flame throwers. The Czechoslovakian tanks were similar to the Soviet T-34 tanks but had tank hulls which were smoother and better finished. The tank guns had no muzzle brakes. The infantry battalion was equipped with 57-mm AT guns. A squad consisted of nine soldiers and had no antitank rifle.
- The red group concentrated near Olomouc and marched to its assembling area near Velka Strelna (P 50/O 06). After losing the hills between Velka Strelna and Libava, the blue group was employed in field fortifications south of Libava. Contingents of the red group had to contain the enemy by a feint attack against the positions south of Libava, while the bulk of the group (at least two regiments) was to be employed for the main attack on Libava from the east.

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The contingent attacking Libava from the south was relieved during the maneuver. It was emphasized that the enemy had to be surprised by the attack which was to be conducted in a terrain where such operations would not be expected. Another strict order indicated that the infantry was not allowed to retreat if the terrain made an advance impossible. This order referred to the attacking group south of Libava which was temporarily stopped by a concentrated defensive fire. Tanks were also to be employed in difficult terrains which the enemy probably thought tankproof.

4. The maneuver was followed by an open air critique which was to be succeeded by a final critique a few days later. The critique was given by a lieutenant general; two colonels had been the commanders of the divisions. Two Soviet field grade officers who had been attached to the divisions were also present. The members of the infantry school had to return to Lipnik before the end of the critique to prepare a written report on their observations. The ignorance of unit leaders up to battalion commanders was severely criticized. It was said that these officers badly needed polishing up their military knowledge. During the attacking phase, it was observed that the various units became muddled to an extent that the individual commanding officers lost control over their units and influence on the operations. The planning preceding the maneuver and the work by the divisional and regimental headquarters during the field exercises was appreciated. The reconnaissance company was also favorably mentioned. Deficiencies criticized included lack of cooperation with supporting weapons which were not even mentioned in orders by leaders of infantry units. Tank units received orders which contradicted those given to the infantry.
5. Since most of the medium-rank officers came from the working class, their inefficiency was caused by a lack of intelligence and sufficient interest in military matters. They were willing to obey orders, but had no personal initiative. The regular NCOs, however, were well trained. The EM also showed interest in the field exercise and were rather efficient in camouflage and the construction of field fortifications. Reserve officers also confirmed the efficient training of NCOs and EM.
6. The commanding officer of the heavy machine gun company was a lieutenant who previously worked as a foundryhand at the steel plant at Olomouc. Having assigned the elements of his company to the infantry companies of the battalion, he thought his responsibility had ended. The personnel of the heavy machine gun company had only small knowledge of overhead firing or indirect fire and complained that the advancing infantry did not leave them any firing lane. The soldiers stated that they were mostly trained by NCOs who had only a limited theoretical knowledge.
7. The deputy commanders in charge of political affairs who mostly graduated from the Haken School in Prague were very busy during the maneuver. They informed the soldiers on the tactical situation, distributed leaflets with names of soldiers who distinguished themselves on combat patrol, in trenching activities, or as scouts, and held discussions during lulls in combat to raise the efficiency of the soldiers. The Vit nejedly troupe presented a show including plays, musicals and other performances at Libava during the maneuver. Political indoctrination of the army appeared to have made much progress.

Comment. In September 1952, a similar maneuver was held in the same area with the 14th Mech Div from Olomouc as attacking force and the 6th Inf Div from Brno in the defense. The maneuver mentioned in the present report probably was also conducted by divisions of the IV Corps from Brno which is known to concentrate at the M. Libava troop training grounds for summer training every year.

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